

Draft Minutes
Connecticut Judicial Branch Access to Justice Commission's
Subcommittee on the ABA and Technology & Access to Justice
18 January 2012
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Windsor, CT

The Connecticut Judicial Branch Access to Justice Commission's *Subcommittee on the American Bar Association and Technology & Access to Justice* met on Wednesday, January 18, 2012 in the Law Offices of Attorney Herman Woodard Jr. at 780 Prospect Hill Road, Windsor, Ct.

Committee members in attendance: Atty. Herman Woodard Jr. (Chair), Atty. Jeffrey Dowd, Ms. Jennifer Ensign, Ms. Rhonda Stearley-Hebert, Ms. Sandra Lugo-Gines, and Atty. Susan Nofi-Bendici.

Others in attendance: Heather Nann Collins, support staff, Superior Court Operations Division.

The meeting was called to order at 2:15 p.m. by Atty. Woodard

- I. Atty. Woodard welcomed the members of the Subcommittee
- II. The members reviewed and approved the meeting minutes of 14 November, 2011.
- III. Discussion of Subcommittee's progress: Atty. Woodard asked the members to update the Subcommittee on their assigned tasks:
 - Ms. Stearley-Hebert reported that the Branch has launched its own Twitter feed, which can be found at (@CtStateCourts), in January in an effort to notify the public about court activities, court closings, certain news events or deadlines, and so on. Because Tweets are limited to 140 characters, the user will still be directed to the Branch's webpage, jud.ct.gov, for more complete information. On the first day that its launch was announced, the Twitter feed went from about a dozen followers to a couple of hundred and to several hundred by the end of the first week. Twitter followers are notified via their online account or when something new has been posted on the Branch webpage. The Branch will allow a person to sign up to receive a Twitter feed by going to the Twitter logo at the bottom of the homepage. Ms. Stearley-Hebert also reported that External Affairs did extensive research on utilizing other social media, including YouTube, as a medium to providing information; there remain some concerns about posting so the idea is on hold for now.

- Ms. Ensign reported to the Subcommittee that there are more than 26,000 different files contained within the Branch website, such as pages, forms, files, videos, publications. According to Ms. Ensign about 6,000 of those pages will need to be recoded to make them accessible to people with different abilities, such as those with vision loss who use readers or need to change font size or background colors. Ms. Lugo-Gines, the Superior Court Operations Division coordinator for the ADA, said that federal regulations regarding website accessibility currently apply only to federal government sites, but she believes it is simply a matter of time before those standards apply to state government.

- Attorney Dowd provided information on hearing loop technology, which can greatly enhance the quality of audio for people who use certain types of hearing aid and is growing in use in some states (New York, in particular) in public places; the members may try to arrange a demonstration of hearing loop technology for the near future; Atty. Dowd has corresponded with a Michigan courthouse that has been utilizing the technology by integrating it with their audio court recording system and they have had excellent luck with it.

- The members discussed videoconferencing as a means of improving access to justice. While it is currently used in some proceedings involving incarcerated defendants, as well as by the Branch's probation division, there may be other ways in which it can be utilized to allow pro bono service to people. It was also noted that there are certain Practice Book rules which allow videoconferencing to be utilized for some proceedings but there are proposals to allow for its expansion; there have been concerns expressed by the defense bar in terms of substituting videoconferencing for on-site visits with incarcerated clients, as well as the ability of a lawyer, or judge or jury member to "get a feel" for a person electronically testifying as opposed to in-person testimony.

- Atty. Woodard introduced the Subcommittee's newest member, Attorney Susan Nofi-Bendici, Deputy Director of New Haven Legal Assistance Association. Atty. Nofi-Bendici volunteered to begin the task of reviewing what pages and videos and other information found on the Judicial Branch website that increases access to justice might be moved to a single ATJ, one-stop-shop page for the Branch. Creating a web page that brings that information together in cohesive manner will very likely be a recommendation from this subcommittee to the full Commission.

- Atty. Woodard gave a brief overview of discussions that he has had with Atty. Robert Echols of the [American Bar Association's Resource Center for Access to Justice](#).

IV. The Subcommittee agreed to meet at least once and possibly twice before the next meeting of the full Commission, with a date or dates and time to be announced. Atty. Woodard thanked the members for their attendance and asked them to continue examining the issues and develop specific recommendations to increase access to justice. The meeting adjourned at 3:25 p.m.